

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SS-15 AID-05 CIAE-00
INR-10 JUSE-00 NSAE-00 CTME-00 SNM-05 TRSE-00
USIA-06 NSC-05 OES-07 OMB-01 L-03 HA-05 AGRE-00
IGA-02 EB-08 /110 W
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R 220700Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9039
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
DEA HQS WASHDC
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
CINCPAC

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 0241

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: SNAR UN LA
SUBJECT: NARCOTICS IN LAOS

REF: A STATE 43009, B STATE 41938

SUMARY: EMBASSY VIENTIANE RECOMMENDS WE SHARE WITH
UNFDAC AND OTHER DONORS WHAT INFORMATION WE CAN ON LAO
COMPLICITY IN THE ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFIC. WE SHOULD THEN
CONSULT AS TO WHAT ACTION WE SHOULD TAKE. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY VIENTIANE WELCOMES THE DEPARTMENT'S
DECISION TO TELL THE WEDES THAT THERE IS SUBSTANCE TO
REPORTS THAT ALLEGE LPDR INVOLVEMENT IN ILLICIT NAR-
COTICS SALES (REF A). WE ALSO STRONGLY SUPPORT GENEVA'S

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APPROACH TO UNFDAC DIRECTOR-DESIGNATE REXED (GENEVA 2343)
TO URGE THAT UNFDAC HOLD THE LAO TO THE TERMS OF THE NOVEMBER
1977 AGREEMENT. IN FACT, AS INDICATED IN VIENTIANE 234, WE
WOULD GO FURTHER AND SUGGEST THE SUSPENSION OF FUNDING
OF THE KILOMETER 62 REHABILITATION PROJECT AS A LEVER
ON THE LAO TO COMPLY WITH THE AGREEMENT.

2. PRIOR TO RECEIVING THE REFTELS, WE HAD DRAFTED A TELEGRAM IN THE FORM OF AN OPTIONS PAPER WHICH ENDED BY RECOMMENDING THAT WE SHARE OUR INFORMATION WITH THE SWEDES. HOWEVER, OUR DRAFT RECOMMENDATION, WHICH IS ADMITTEDLY BASED ON IMCOMPLETE INFORMATION, WAS ALSO TO SHARE OUR INFORMATION WITH REXED. GENEVA'S 2343 HAD REQUESTED FURTHER GUIDANCE TO USE WITH HIM.

3. AS WE SEE IT, ANY DECISION TO BLOW THE WHISTLE SERIOUSLY ON THE LAO SHOULD TAKE THE FOLLOWING BASIC CONSIDERATIONS INTO ACCOUNT:

A. WE ARE COMMITTED TO A POLICY OF WORKING TOWARD THE NORMALIZATION OF OUR RELATIONS WITH VIET NAM AND ULTIMATELY WITH ALL THE INDOCHINA COUNTRIES. THIS IS NOT A PRIMARY U.S. POLICY GOAL, NOR IS IT ONE FOR WHICH THERE IS GREAT POPULAR OR CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT. IN THE CASE OF CAMBODIA, HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS MEAN THAT WE WOULD PROBABLY PREFER THAT NO PROGRESS BE MADE TOWARD NORMALIZATION FOR SOME TIME. NEVERTHE LESS, IT IS A LONG-TERM GOAL, AND IT IS ONE WHICH HAS BEEN SET BACK RECENTLY BY THE HUMPHREY-HUNG-THI CASE. OUR RELATIONS WITH LAOS, ALTHOUGH EXTANT, ARE NOT PARTICULARLY WARM OR STRONG. THE LAO MINISTER OF INFORMATION, SISANA SISANE, RECENTLY TOLD A POLISH NEWSMAN THAT "THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN HOSTILE TO US SINCE THE
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LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC WAS FOUNDED."

B. FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS, AS WELL AS FOR THE PURPOSE OF HOPEFULLY REDUCING THE FLOW OF REFUGEES FROM LAOS, WE ARE CURRENTLY CONSIDERING WHETHER TO RESPOND FAVORABLY TO A LAO REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DROUGHT FOOD AID.

C. THERE ARE CERTAIN CURRENT ADVANTAGES, HOWEVER SLIGHT, AS WELL AS POTENTIALLY GREATER LONG TERM ADVANTAGES, IN KEEPING AN UNFDAC PRESENCE IN LAOS.

D. THERE IS A POSSIBILITY OF SERIOUS EMBARRASSMENT, DOMESTICALLY FOR THE DEPARTMENT AND INTERNATIONALLY FOR THE UNITED STATES, IF IT BECAME KNOWN THAT WE APPROVED AND HELPED FINANCE ANTI-NARCOTIC PROGRAMS, SOME ASPECTS OF WHICH SEEM QUITE DUBIOUS, WITH SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS IN A COUNTRY SUSPECTED OF OFFICIAL COMPLICITY IN DRUG TRAFFICKING.

E. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE HIGHLAND PARTS OF LAOS WHERE THERE ARE GENUINE SECURITY PROBLEMS, THERE ARE OTHER

MOUNTAINOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY WHERE LPDR CONTROL IS SECURE AND HIGHLAND CROP SUBSTITUTION PROGRAMS COULD BE CONDUCTED.

F. THERE IS SOME MERIT IN THE LAO CONTENTION THAT HIGHLAND PEOPLE GROWING RICE IN THE LOWLANDS ARE NOT GROWING OPIUM AND THUS NOT INCREASING THE WORLD SUPPLY OF ILLICIT NARCOTICS.

G. THERE ARE SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS IN RESETTLING HIGHLAND PEOPLE IN LOWLAND AREAS WITH INSUFFICIENT MEDICAL CARE AND ATTENTION.

H. THE HIGHLAND LIFESTYLE AND AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES
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HAVE DETRIMENTAL ECOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS EVEN WITHOUT THE NARCOTICS FACTOR.

4. WITH THESE CONSIDERATIONS IN MIND, AND WE ARE SURE THAT OTHERS WILL OCCUR TO THE DEPARTMENT AS WELL, OUR OPTIONS PAPER RECOMMENDED THAT UNFDAC REFUSE TO SUPPLY FUNDS FOR BOTH THE CROP SUBSTITUTION PROJECT AND THE KM 62 FACILITY UNTIL AN ADEQUATE SITE HAD BEEN FOUND FOR THE CROP SUBSTITUTION PROJECT. IN ADDITION, WE BELIEVE THAT AN ALL AGENCIES REVIEW SHOULD BE HELD OF WHAT INFORMATION WE HAVE ON LPDR TRAFFICKING COMPLICITY. THE REVIEW SHOULD BE CONDUCTED SO AS TO REACH A DETERMINATION AS TO WHAT INFORMATION MIGHT BE SHARED WITH UNFDAC AND OTHER DONORS WITHOUT JEOPARDIZING ONGOING OPERATIONS OR VIOLATING SECURITY RESTRICTIONS. WE WOULD THEN PASS ON THE INFORMATION AND CONSULT WITH UNFDAC AND OTHER DONORS AS TO WHAT ACTION, IF ANY, WE TAKE AGAINST THE LPDR.

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

5. THIS COURSE OF ACTION IS NOT WITHOUT RISKS. IT
COULD SET BACK THE NORMALIZATION PROCESS AND JEOPARDIZE
THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF BOTH UNFDAC/LAOS AND EMBASSY
VIENTIANE. THE PUBLICITY WHICH WOULD INEVITABLY EMERGE
FROM THE CONSULTATION PROCESS WOULD PROBABLY MAKE ANY
HUMANITARIAN DROUGHT AID TO LAOS POLITICALLY IMPOSSIBLE.
ON THE OTHER HAND, THIS OPTION HAS NO BAD HUMAN RIGHTS
IMPLICATIONS, IT COULD PRODUCE A SOUNDER AND MORE PRO-
DUCTIVE UNFDAC PROGRAM, AND IT SHOWS THE LAO THAT THEY
CANNOT IGNORE THE TERMS OF AGREEMENTS THEY HAVE SIGNED.
IT ALSO REDUCES THE CHANCES OF EMBARRASSMENT OVER OUR
SUPPORTING UNFDAC PROGRAMS WHILE KNOWING OF BUT DOING
NOTHING ABOUT LAO TRAFFICKING COMPLICITY.

6. THE OPTIMUM OUTCOME OF OUR TOUGHER LINE WOULD BE A
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SWITCH BY THE LPDR TO A STRONG ANTI-NARCOTIC POSITION.

WE THINK THIS IS UNLIKELY. AS WE SEE IT, THE LAO WILL
PROBABLY DO NOTHING AND UNFDAC/LAOS WILL THEN PROBABLY
DISAPPEAR. THIS IS NOT AN OUTCOME TO BE HOPED FOR, BUT
IT IS AT LEAST LESS UNDESIRABLY THAN CONTINUING TO
SPEND UNFDAC MONEY ON HIGH-COST PROGRAMS IN A COUNTRY
WHOSE GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO CONNIVE IN THE INTERNATIONAL
DRUG TRAFFIC.
ROBERTS

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